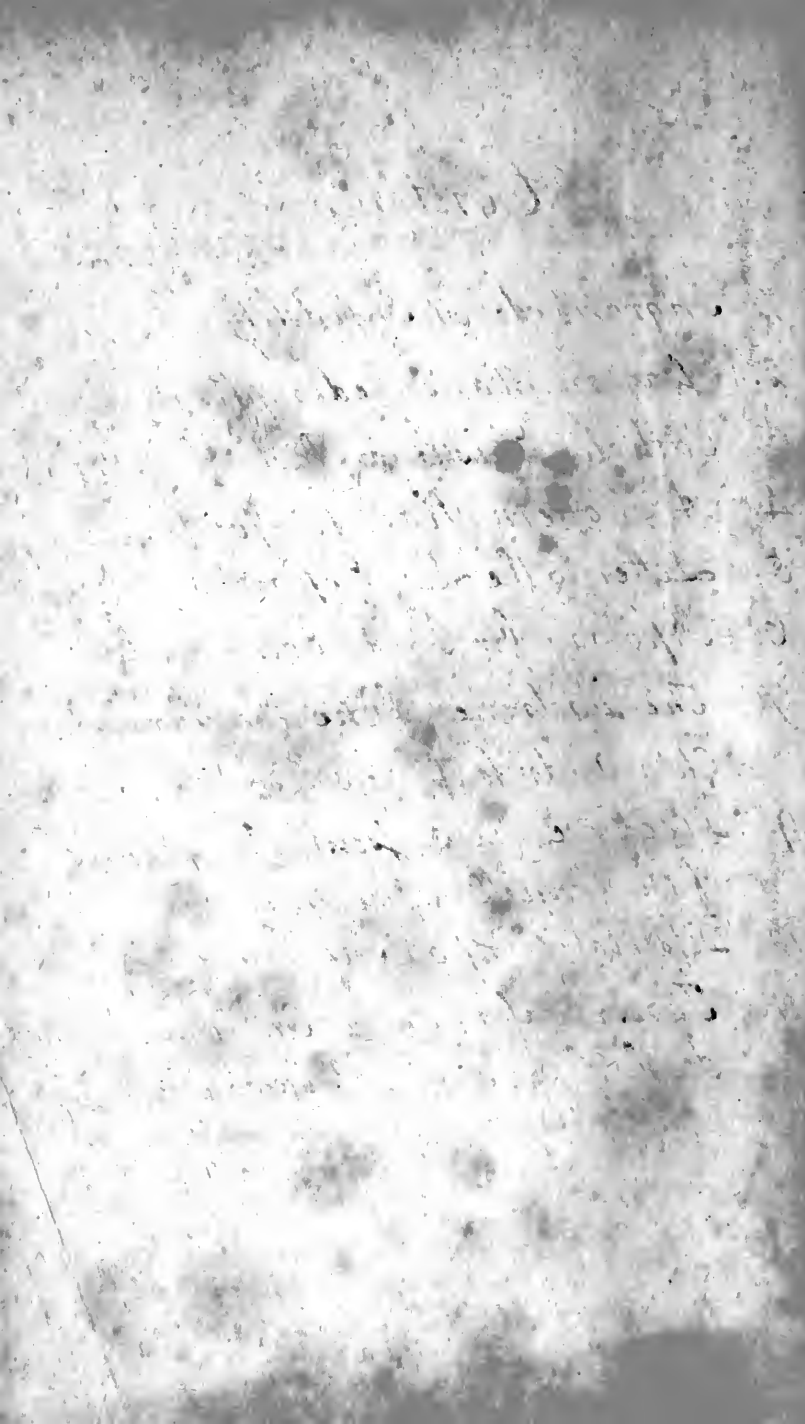


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THE
INGRATITUDE OF INFIDELITY:

PROVEABLE FROM THE
HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST,

BEING

The most beneficial Appointments to Mankind, that are
within the known Plan of God's moral Government.

ADDRESSED TO
MODERN-DEISTS, JEWS, PAPISTS,
AND
OTHER UNBELIEVERS.

BY CALEB FLEMING, D. D.
Pastor of a Protestant Dissenting Church, who meet at
Pinner's Hall.

LONDON:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard.
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TELEGRAMS: "INGRAMS" LONDON

A N

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

P U B L I C.

SHOULD it be asked, what the Author could propose, by publishing two discourses upon such *trite*, common subjects, as those of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ? his answer would be, that the interpretation therein given of them, has afforded him the most solid satisfaction, after about forty years more stated inquiry. Hence he has indulged an imagination, that the pleasing, and delightful view he has been able to take of the Gospel Institution, in these most beneficial appointments, may possibly lay hold on some unbeliever: as well as throw light upon the subject, in the opinion of some believers. Among those of the latter who affect to monopolize the name of *Orthodox*, he presumes not upon having many readers. Yet, he hopes for attention from the more liberal and ingenuous inquirers after truth; and for

these reasons, *viz.* the doctrinal views he has taken are not systematical; and, he trusts, they are neither fanciful, nor irrational and groundless.

He could most earnestly wish that both the *sceptic*, and the more confirmed modernist would give them a careful reading; for had he thought infidelity an harmless thing,* he would not thus have employed the press. And he can assure the infidel, that whatever weakness he may either find or fancy in the argument, it is the production of benevolence.

Perhaps the PAPIST may take offence at being classed with unbelievers; yet, if he could without prejudice calmly consider, he would assuredly know, that his *faith* is not the result of a free inquiry; or, of a judgment formed upon the written New Testament canon: but it is a merely *implicite credulity* in his Priest, and in what his Priest calls the church. He ought not, after this, to think himself at all insulted, or ill-used by being put into the company of unbelievers. Nay, inasmuch as he openly rejects

* *Ali*, the son-in-law of Mahomet, could say, "Infidelity is the cause of the removal of God's blessing." *Oakley's History of the Saracens*, V. ii. p. 338. The Son of God has said, "he that believeth not, shall be condemned." Mark xvi. 16.

the very first or fundamental principles of the christian-religion, *viz.* the acknowledgment of but one God the Father; and of but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; he thereby cuts himself off from all claim to the character of Christian. In fact, a *papist*, as such, has no religion; since he has neither eyes nor ears of his own; for he sacrificeth his reason and understanding at the altar of *mystery*; and blindly subjugates conscience to priestly dominion. We may moreover, affirm, that no man ever did or ever could become in principle a *Papist*, who understood the genuine design of Christ's humiliation and exaltation.*—Where *ignorance is the mother of devotion*, there the homage is only a fit offering to blind, deaf, and dumb idols.

Did the Jew but once make himself acquainted with the New Testament doctrine of these divine appointments, he would soon quit his infidelity; and gladly put himself under the guidance and government of that same Jesus of Nazareth, who was born a Jew; and whom his own nation crucified; but whom God raised from the dead and exalted to sovereignty; and who is the most amiable and friendly character in the known

* N. B. Upon a supposition that the late Pope was poisoned by the Jesuits, what must be thought of that superstition?

kingdom of God.—At the same time, we are constrained to own, that the doctrine of these great facts has been, and yet is thickly covered with fanciful opinion and extravagant meaning, so as to cherish and confirm the prejudices both of Jew and Pagan. These extravagancies, did certainly give rise to the *Mahometan Imposture*. Nevertheless, wherever the doctrine is seen and understood in its rational, truly great and divine meaning, there its beneficial teachings do powerfully excite the highest admiration, thanksgiving, and praise.

Such we know is the vast importance of our Lord's humiliation and exaltation, as that they have principally engaged the attention of Apostles whilst writing their epistles; for these facts are what give the genius, spirit, and peculiar complexion of those sacred writings.

As to whatever disagreement may be found in the Author's conceptions, with those of any of his fellow-christians, he makes no apology; for he owns no human standard either of his faith, hope, or worship. Conscious he is of holding no opinion or principle injurious to any part of the human family. But penetrated with an idea of the alarming superstructure of superstition, idolatry and absurdity, built and building upon the humiliation

miliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ ; i. e. being affected painfully with “ the gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble ; that work of man which shall be burnt up, when the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is !” he has made this remonstrance.

Perfuated he is also, that if there be any true religion in the world attended with full evidence, it must be that of the christian. Not indeed as it appears in any civil church establishment ;* nor, in any sect or party of professors, under the name of *Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Socinus, Pelagius*, or others ; but as found in the New Testament written Code. Neither is it with him probable, that any one professing Christian should be able to form a just idea of that religion, who does not derive his knowledge from an unprejudiced, careful, and honest examination of that sacred canon. The *Berean* inquiring spirit is the most noble : and the idle uninquiring one is the most debasing. In all secular pursuits and claims, men demand much better security—an implicate faith will not satisfy them in little things ; though it does in great things.

* “ *Religion* may be evaporated with little or no damage to the establishment.” See the *CONFESSIO*NAL, 3d Edit. p. viii,

Finally, the Author pretends not to have done more, in these discourses, than to have stated the doctrinal teachings of our Lord's *humiliation* and *exaltation* in a light, which to him appears to be most rational and beneficially instructive; manifesting a *design* full of divinely wise and fatherly goodness! a design, which has the most salutary aspect on a world of creatures made rational, intelligent, and accountable; probationers for a world of recompence. Appointments they therefore are, altogether worthy of that infinite spirit, who is supremely adorable in the whole of the Gospel-discoveries made both of his truth and grace; and which must consequently fix the charge of *ingratitude* upon the unbeliever, who may consult the evidence.

Whatever imperfections may be found in the method, style, language, or sentiment; these discourses speak the genuine conceptions of a man who must, according to the course of nature, soon have a personal interview with that same divine personage, whom the one God the Father has constituted the one Lord both over the dead and over the living.—

Hoxton-Square,
Jan. 20. 1775.

ON THE
HUMILIATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

ST. John, who perfectly well understood the nature and evidence of the Christian Institution, says, "Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us; "and we ought to lay down our lives for the "brethren." See his first epistle, third chapter and sixteenth verse.—

There is not any thing which more distinguisheth the Gospel-religion from all others, than the divine benevolence which it breathes towards mankind; and the apt tendency which its doctrines have, to inspire all sincere professors with that same divine spirit. It has all the characteristic lines and features of an heavenly complexion; for this reason it claims a superlative excellence; and has this peculiar glory, that it is the *last*, and therefore must be the most perfect revelation which shall ever be made of the truth and grace of God, in this probationary state of man. No other discoveries can he expect to be made of the divine mind, until the future openings of the hea-

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2 *On the Humiliation of Jesus Christ.*

venly scenes. Which openings, will rather be a revelation of the *final consequences* of virtue and piety, and of their contraries, by the judicial determination of the man Christ Jesus, whom God has appointed to judge the world in righteousness. Of the certainty of which, he has given ground of credit to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.

It is an humiliating view which we take of the depravity of the professing Christian world, *viz.* that the great design of the death of Christ, seems to be but very little understood. The which ungrateful truth, affords a powerful reason why it should be yet farther considered, and held up to the public eye, in some more rational point of view. Attend we then to this apostolical declaration. And let us,

I. Enquire how it is we may perceive that the love of God is made manifest, because, or by reason of Jesus Christ laying down his life for us. And

II. What is the extensive spirit of benevolence, which it lays every Christian under to the brethren.

Here it should be observed, that the word God, is scarce found in any of the Greek copies, and is not in the Syriac, as critics have remarked. But it runs thus, *hereby perceive we the LOVE*; because, &c. The love is then emphatical. Now a careful reader of this Epistle will find, that the love of God is the burden of its address. And it is the *manner* of love which
the

the Father hath bestowed upon us, in calling us his sons, which gives the spirit of the foregoing context. Personal moral righteousness, is what constitutes the filiation. And for the purpose of promoting this, "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Consequently, the love here mentioned in my text, must respect the divine measures of promoting man's righteousness, and discountenancing his unrighteousness.

Certain it is, that the love here mentioned, has not to do with things of a secular and civil nature; but it is a love which St. *John* is illustrating, as it has for its object, the superlative good of man. No one can acquaint himself well with the New Testament canon, but must be persuaded, that its salutary *grace*, favour, or love, neither is, nor can be expressed by the sensitive, the material, perishing good; forasmuch as its professed design is, to take off the eye of the christian from the things that are visible and earthly; and to fix his first desire upon things invisible and heavenly. It would persuade to a mortifiedness to the world, and to all its treasures; in other words, it would implant a settled aversion in him to its lustings, evil-maxims and manners.

Indeed the love which God has for us, is a fatherly concern for our becoming regular, virtuous, and amiable in the whole of our morals; as what will render us peaceful, comfortable, and happy in every mode and situation of our existence.

On the Humiliation of Jesus Christ.

We cannot possibly mistake in this idea which we form of divine love; since it is expressive of the most adorable benevolence; which will thus be manifest, *viz.* if we form any rational conception of his *wisdom* and *goodness* who gave us being; we must be persuaded, he could not be unconcerned about or unmindful of our attaining to those ends, which essential love did propose by giving us existence:—But those ends, could be nothing less than our moral rectitude; the *basis* of all real and permanent felicity. We have no other way of either perceiving or experiencing the *love* here mentioned, which gives the significance and beneficial importance of all Gospel address.—

St. *John* placeth before us, a special and indisputable instance of this love, in that he whom God had manifested to destroy the works of the devil, has *laid down his life for us*. We may then be absolutely certain, that *he* who thus laid down his life, could not be God: He could not, forasmuch as the Greek word (*ψυχή*) rendered *life*, signifies what breathes and respire; and therefore is by no means applicable to God: it is too low, gross, and creaturely an idea; it supposes something organized, which may be parted-with, given up, resigned, and even extinguished. A very debased and dishonourable apprehension of the first cause, and creator of all; since no liableness to a painful passiveness can be applicable to an infinite, unchangeable, eternal spirit: the supposition of any possible abatement of his enlivening influences and impressions would sicken all nature, and enfeeble the whole creation; the
thought

thought of any possible change in him would be horrible ! and insupportably shocking !

These are not to be reckoned idle, impertinent, or needless remarks, when we have such numbers around us so depraved, by their wild conceptions and astonishing credulity, as to ascribe those absolute incommunicable perfections to a man who laid down his life ; which ascriptions, would conclude him unoriginated and independent ; for how common is it for men to speak of Jesus Christ, *as God equal with the Father in power and glory*, as well as also *of the same substance* ? The daring impiety stares in ones face, as we walk the streets of this great city : the Popish hand-writing upon the walls, is, **JESUS CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL GOD, JEHOVAH !** whereas his laying down his life, determines him to be truly and properly man. And that he would do this, he himself beforehand declared to his disciples more than once.* We cannot therefore mistake in applying the person whom St. *John* speaks of in the text, to the *man Christ Jesus* ; that good shepherd, who did not only lay down his life for the sheep, but who received *a commandment from the Father*, which rendered it so highly fit and proper he should so do : For, in truth, he had not made any forfeiture of life : neither did he lie exposed to the common sentence of mortality. If therefore his life was taken away, it must be by his own consent, and in an obedient conformity to the plan of his divine mission ; of which he had been previously informed by the Father.

* *Job.* x. 15, 17, 18. And Chap. xv. 13.

6 *On the Humiliation of Jesus Christ.*

The great end for which he laid down his life, was, to demonstrate the *love of God* to mankind, in that he laid it down FOR US. And hence it is that he says, “therefore does my Father “love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep.”

The great inquiry will now be, in what respects he did truly die FOR US; i. e. for our benefit?—

But here we should premise a few things—Jesus Christ, did not give his murderers the least ground of accusation, either of impiety, or crime; there was not so much as any guile found in his lips; and he even held up beforehand to their eye, the aggravated crime they would commit, the enormous guilt they would contract, by their ungrateful and cruel treatment of him. Nay, he even led them to pass that sentence of condemnation upon themselves.*

Neither did he die in our room and stead: this was impossible; because he was no sinner: nor could he sustain either the guilt or the punishment of sin. So that in the eye of truth and of God, he could neither have our iniquities imputed to him, nor sustain the demerit of them; For, “though he died the just by the hands of “the unjust;” yet, he could not die in their room and stead: but it was by *wicked* hands he was crucified and slain. The very Roman Governour who passed the sentence of death upon him, declared his innocence before all the peo-

* Matt. xxi. 33 to 40.

ple; and he never once owned, that he could be chargeable with, or accountable for others crimes.—

Again, his laying down his life for us, does not imply in it an atoning, placating sacrifice; calculated to appease and reconcile the holy God; or to make him more propitious to a world of sinful creatures: But it was to demonstrate, that Deity, is, in his own nature, and in all his measures with mankind, PROPITIOUS. Hence it was, he appointed that Jesus Christ should lay down his life, in order to reconcile sinners to himself; or, that he should thus die, “the just by the hands of the unjust, that he might *bring us to God.*” His death was truly a PROPITIATORY, which more than answered to the mercy-seat, with which the Jews had been favoured: forasmuch as a demonstration is thereby given, that a righteous God does not impute sin to the penitent; since *repentance and remission of sins* was the express divine message to his murderers—Apostles were to begin to proclaim this general pardon *first* at Jerusalem. Not any conceivable event could have given such demonstration of the merciful nature of God; thus pure, unmerited, unpurchased divine love to a sinful world, is rendered illustrious, in the appointment of Christ’s death. A method of making the manifestation, quite out of the reach of any created, derived goodness either to have designed, or contrived; and which idea, I apprehend St. Paul had, when he calls the doctrine of the cross, (in the eye of men) the *foolishness* of God, and the *weakness* of God.—And yet, how very wonderful is the *apparatus* of prophecy running through all the ages of the world, for so

many thousand years ! and abundantly confirmed by miracle.—

But here observe, we are not to stop short in the event of Christ's death ; for he himself has said, " therefore does my Father love me, because " I lay down my life, *that I might take it up* " *again.*" We are, accordingly, to carry our views onward to his ascension to the right hand of power ; and to those high offices which he sustains as the one Lord. We thus take a view of *the joy that had been set before him* : the recompence of reward which was to be bestowed on him by the Father ; " who, in order to the bringing " of many sons to glory, thus made the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." So far therefore is the death of Christ from being the measure of *reconciling God to men*, that the most express doctrine of the cross, is, *to reconcile men to God*, and an Apostle thus argues, " we being reconciled unto God by the death of " his son, much more shall we be saved by his " life."—

Artful priests, and deluded systematical professors are wont to lay the emphasis of man's salvation, *wholly* upon the death of Christ ; whereas, there could have been no meaning, no efficacy at all in his death, had he not risen again. So says St. Paul, " if Christ be not raised, your faith is " vain, you are yet in your sins."* A full proof that his death was not the purchase of remission, or the term of man's justification in the sight of

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

God ; “ for though he was delivered for our offences, or, to expose the malignity of sin ; yet “ he was raised again for our justification ;” for by this means it is, that our hopes in the mercy of God unto *eternal life*, are justified.* There could not then be any atoning virtue in his death, when applied to God ; but it was to give us an abhorrence of sin ; and to cure us of all faulty dispositions ; to purge our consciences from dead works ; and to enable us to serve the living God.

Again, his obedience to the death, cannot be a compensation, or make the least satisfaction for our want of obedience : i. e. it cannot, by any means, be imputed to us, or reckoned as our obedience, however strong our faith is in his having been perfectly conformable to the divine will, throughout his very painful endurance.

The idea is absurd and full of extravagance, and a very perverse application of the design of his death. In truth, for us to suppose, that either the obedience or the disobedience of another can be reckoned ours, is to confound all ideas of truth and right : it is to rob the holy God of the glory of his perfections ; and to deny there is any equity in his ways, or any righteousness in his dealings with man : he would no longer be an object of our trust, hope, or confidence ; neither should we be able to pay the least regard to his moral government. The romantic idea of a *transfer* either of righteousness or of sin, is extremely reproachful to the christian profession : not any

* Rom. iv. 25.

idea or notion being more dishonourable to the Supreme Governor.

On the other hand, the love of God, rightly understood, in the appointment of the death of Christ, has *wisdom* and *goodness* in it which demands our admiration, thanksgiving and praise! inasmuch as it has shewn the *inefficacy* of all symbolical bloody sacrifice, by having far more expressively exposed the *evil* of sin, or of that worldliness which had covered the earth with ignorance, superstition, idolatry and vice. The malignity of which worldliness flagrantly appeared, in mens putting to death God's well-beloved Son, by whom he had revealed all his truth and all his grace. Even the most illustrious displays of omnipotent goodness, throughout his ministrations, had not been sufficient to prevent such an unexampled outrage of impiety and crime.

In consequence of this depraved state of the world, the PARACLETE, or *promise of the Father*, was to convince the world of sin; because they had not believed on him who had had the most complete credentials to a divine character and mission:—and to convince also of the unspeakable advantage of *righteousness*; since, by virtue of his obedience he is gone to the Father; and is by him placed at the right hand of power;—and also to convince of *judgement*: because the prince of this world is judged; which I should read convince of *condemnation*; because a worldly spirit is by him condemned; which worldly spirit, is called the prince of this world:*. Here is a fulness of

* John xiv. 30.

force, energy, and efficacy in the evidence. Moreover, as his death was the pre-requisite to his after-appointments, so the openings of a future state, under the administration of this crucified man, do abundantly shew, the salutary sense in which he laid down his life for us; for so it is that all the precious promises are in him *yea*, and in him *amen*, to the praise and glory of God the Father; and we thus perceive the emphatical love there was in his laying down his life for us.

We are in the *second* place, to take some notice of that extensive benevolence which it lays every christian under to the brethren: the text says, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—It may be asked, who are the *brethren*? I should answer, the *christians*.—Indeed I find this description given of *Christianity* in a late publication, *viz.*—"The view which christianity always gives of *mankind* is the natural one, a community of brethren, the free and equal subjects of a divine government, the heirs of immortality, and the sons of God."—Which I should take to be a much more proper description of the Christian-church, than of mankind in general; as its divine touches and lineaments *sons of God, heirs of immortality*, are what give a *peculiar* lustre and excellence to the last dispensation of the truth and grace of God. Besides, the compellation, *brethren*, in the New Testament writings, is usually characteristic of christians. In my text it must have this precise meaning, and does aptly distinguish them from the unbelieving world. So it is St. Peter would be understood when he says, *honour all men, love the*

the brotherhood;—agreeably to which the blessed Jesus is wont to speak of believers in him, as a *little flock*; a distinct community from the rest of mankind; and he prays for them, as men *hated* by the world.

What are we now to understand, by *laying down our lives for the brethren*?—at the very first view it seems plainly to import, the utmost stretch of human benevolence; answerable to that observation of our Lord's, "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—Now if the New Testament doctrine of Christ's death be carefully examined, it will be found, that its beneficial or salutary effect is always specified under some moral influence and beneficial impression which it makes upon the human mind. Some good disposition which it is calculated to promote. And to the christian it is the great exemplar or pattern of the most perfect human benevolence; but if whilst mankind universally lay in a state of enmity to *truth* and *goodness*, God's messenger, and beloved son Jesus Christ, bore testimony to their infinite importance, by laying down his life in their cause, and for their support; we thereby have a demonstration given, that the rectitude of the human mind, its qualification for happiness does wholly consist in an unreserved obedience to the will of God; or in a steadfast conformity to that will, under the severest trials of humanity. This being the case, the Christian, in imitation of his Lord, ought to be willing and ready to lay down his life for the brethren, whenever the cause of Gospel truth requires such testimony; i. e. he is to shew a like devotedness to the divine will, and a like

like benevolence towards the children of truth and goodness.

It assuredly cannot intend, we should draw the sword, or expose our lives in an hostile manner for the defence of the *brethren*; it cannot: for the religion of Jesus utterly disowns and condemns any unfriendly, inimical, or bloody measures in its propagation, or defence. It abhors both the *Mahometan*, and the *Popish* spirit, and in its cause, will not permit the use of any offensive weapon whatsoever. It puts none to pain, torture, or death. Nor does it allow of any the least malevolence towards the unbeliever. It requires a readiness to lay down our lives in testimony of the high esteem and veneration we have of our holy religion, whenever the hand of persecution makes the demand upon us; or when, in the language of an ingenious pen, “we have “nothing left us to do, but to remonstrate and “suffer.”*

This devotedness to the cause of truth, is not only to operate in an age of persecution, but will upon all occasions whatsoever which try the patience, meekness, and fortitude of the christian. His temper and behaviour will uniformly shew, he has such ideas of God’s love to the world, made manifest in his Son’s laying down his life for us, as habitually dispose him to devote all his powers to the service, and in the cause of truth and virtue; an imitation of his Lord, that is most beneficial to the brethren. Herein the same spirit of benevolence operates in the

* A friend in North Britain.

christian which did operate in him “who gave
 “himself for us, that he might deliver us from
 “the evil of this present world;” and conspicuously
 place before us the most joyous prospects of
 the final recompence; an assurance being thereby
 given of *eternal life* to all, who by a patient con-
 tinuance in well-doing, do seek glory, honour,
 and immortality! In a word, the moral obliga-
 tion, here mentioned by St. *John*, arising from
 the death of Christ, intends, our being possessed
 of and animated by that same spirit of benevo-
 lence, which always consults the reputation and
 honour of our holy religion; and renders it amia-
 ble in the eyes of all, who see our conversation
 to be thus exemplary towards our brethren.

If the apostolic observation has been rightly
 understood, several useful instructions will be de-
 ducible therefrom.—Such as,

I. The most interesting and engaging capital
 truth, held up to us in the death of Christ, is,
 the *love of God to mankind*. His death certainly
 is the most convincing evidence that can be given
 of God’s good-will to a sinful world; as it proves
 him placable and propitious to the worst of sin-
 ners. “Go, says the risen Jesus, preach repent-
 “ance and remission of sins to all nations; and
 “begin at Jerusalem, the city of my murder-
 “ers! Let them and all mankind know, that
 “God would have none of his human offspring
 “perish; but would have all of us come to re-
 “pentance: or, to a knowledge of the truth,
 “and be saved.” This is the express doctrine of
 Christ’s death; therefore there could be no marks
 of divine displeasure shewn to the blessed Jesus,
 in

in the article of his sufferings; there could not possibly be any thing like the least token of God's displeasure to a well beloved Son, who was expressing the highest act of obedience and resignation to the will of his Father, in thus laying down his life for us:

They therefore must have very unjustifiable notions of the *Supreme*, who imagine, he poured out his wrath upon his obedient beloved Son, in whom he was always well pleased. On the contrary, he saw, he approved, he delighted in the singularly instructive, and most compleat exemplar of obedience. Nay, our blessed Lord himself had the consciousness that his whole behaviour under the severest trials of humanity, was not only approved of, but would be abundantly rewarded by his Father: he knew he had not forsaken him; though the chief priests and people looked upon him and reviled him as if he had: *They did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, forsaken.*

Again, notwithstanding the atrocious wickedness of his murderers, who had accumulated a most aggravated guilt, deserving of the hottest vengeance; yet so far from pouring down his wrath upon this ungrateful provoking people, the merciful, long suffering God, vouchsafed to the truly penitent murderer, not only pardon, but the promise of eternal life; for though at the crucifixion, the holy God gave them awful and alarming evidence of this matchless impiety, by the earth's trembling, the rocks rending, the sun's withdrawing his rays! yet the offended Majesty proceeded not to swallow up that wicked city, which had perpetrated the most daring and pro-

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voking insults to the *light of the world!* that great revealer of divine truth and grace.

As to those *Jews* who remained impenitent, and retained an hatred of truth, these, having filled up the measure of their iniquity, either fell a sacrifice to the Roman vengeance; or else became vagabonds, scattered over the face of the earth: and to this day, are but wanderers, vainly expecting that promised deliverer, whom their nation had rejected and crucified.

One might now ask, who is it that cannot perceive the *love of God* made illustrious in this great event? who can contemplate the death of Christ, and not discover it to be the most powerful persuasive display ever made of God's love to mankind? for by means of that finished act of obedience to the divine will, the malignity of worldliness is exposed in all its flagrant enormity! Sin could not have appeared so exceedingly sinful, nor a love of truth so divinely powerful a principle, had not Jesus Christ given such demonstration of it, by *laying down his life for us*.

II. No man is able to form a right judgment of the *reason* and *end* of Christ's death, who does not consider it in an inseparable connexion with its consequences; or, unless he takes into his view, those *effects* which are ascribed to its *causality*; for an apostle says, that "because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God did highly exalt him, giving him a name above every name:" For which reason we are to comprehend along with his death, its consequences,

as they did affect himself; a firm trust and confidence in which, was what enabled our Lord thus to glorify his Father, who delighted to exalt him; and also because of the beneficial effects which his death has upon mankind; in that the adorable God in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has been pleased to exemplify in him, the plan of his benevolence and abundant mercy towards mankind. We can also at the same time, enjoy the distinguished honour he has been pleased to confer on one of our own species; by constituting him the prime minister of his providence, and the instrument used by him of raising the dead, and judging the world.

Now, admitting these views of Christ's death to be not only real, but divinely *wise* and *good*, every way beneficial to mankind, we are naturally led to solace ourselves in this event, and make it the subject-matter of our rejoicing before God. St. *Paul* did so, who said, "he determined to "know nothing * save Jesus Christ, and him "crucified:" and *again*, "he would glory in the "cross of Christ, by which the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world."—Not to do this, must be disingenuous and ungrateful.

III. Since the Christian is capable of imitating his Lord, or resembling him even in his death, by laying down his own life for the brethren; it is evident, that what is so currently called the *orthodox* opinion of the death of Christ, cannot be just, nor tenable. No one, I pre-

* i. e. Nothing so much as Jesus Christ, &c.

sume, will dare to affirm, that the christian's laying down his life for the brethren, can operate like a *price* paid to divine justice, or as a compensation; and to satisfy the demands of a violated law, in behalf of the brethren: this would be too open an absurdity; too bold an extravagance:—and yet, how many are there who will have it, that the blood of Christ has this very appeasing effect? Indeed, the *doctrine of satisfaction* is amazingly prevalent; and sadly depraves the sentiments of men, called christians; for it leads to a false refuge and dependence, inasmuch as thereby men are pleading a claim, and fixing a reliance upon the merits of Christ's blood for their justification and acceptance with God, to which they can have no manner of right. And moreover, they thus exclude the very idea of God's pardoning mercies being unmerited and free: forasmuch as if he has received a *price*, or a satisfaction has been made on account of the sinner's crime and guilt, in the nature of a compensation, or a purchase of his pardon, there can be no favour or mercy in the justification. The pardoned sinner, so far from being indebted to the love of God, is solely beholden to the benevolence of Jesus Christ.

These apprehensions are extremely dishonourable and disingenuous to the love of God! They are a shameful perversion of the design of Christ's laying down his life for us. But verily, there is a much more rational, just, and satisfactory sense to be given of that singularly great event, *viz.* that of its moral effect, inspiring with the spirit of divine benevolence, which is seen in the christian's

tian's being thereby led to an *imitation* of his Lord, in laying down his life for the brethren.

IV. Methinks, no one can read the New Testament with an honest and unprejudiced mind, without being convinced, that Jesus Christ did enjoin upon all his disciples and followers, a thankful celebration of the memorials of his death. But this being the truth of the case, it must appear to be very surprising, that so very few professors do reckon themselves under that obligation. It cannot but be matter of painful concern to a benevolent mind, that one of the very plainest and most express of our Lord's injunctions or institutions, in the celebration of which he has the fullest demonstration that was ever given of the *love of God*, should be the least understood and observed among professing christians. A lively writer, in some sermons lately published, has spoken thus nervously upon this subject—he says, “he should be glad there was “no distinction in his society between worshippers and communicants; for we must have “very extraordinary charity to suppose a man a “real disciple of Christ, at the same time that he “neglects a request, a desire of his master, given “under circumstances that must sensibly affect his “heart, and solely addressed to his humanity and “gratitude.”—*He adds*, “in the apostolic age, “for a man to have pretended to be a christian, “and not attend the memorial rite, would have “been as absurd, as if one should pretend to religious character, whose conduct was prophane “and immoral.”* So far my Author.

* David Williams's Sermons, Vol. 1. p. 142. and 180.

Some learned and good men have, I apprehend, carried the obligation to an extreme by pleading for *Infant-Communion*; which surely can have no tendency to recommend the celebration of the memorial rite; since there is no ability either of self-examination, or any capacity of discovering the moral intention. † Yet, as soon as our youth, of either sex, are capable of contemplating the love of God, as displayed in our Lord's laying down his life for us, or can see that it condemns all worldly lustings, they ought to celebrate the memorial rite. That learned and amiable confessor, Mr. T. EMLYN, has said, "so long as this memorial was kept up, so long the christian religion could never be defaced; and this being handed down from one age to another, became a standing evidence of the
"matter

† It differs greatly from Baptism, which when applied either to infants or grown persons, only initiates into a kingdom, wherein Jesus Christ presides as the one Lord; and entitles to the privileges and immunities of that kingdom. Thus the first converts and their households were distinguished from the families of unbelievers, both among Jews and Gentiles; and thus the infant-offspring of Christians are put under the protection and government of that one Lord, and are to be educated in the nurture and admonition of his teachings. Whereas, in the celebration of the Eucharist, there must be a distinguishing mind in the communicant; he is to *discern the Lord's body, having examined himself*, and seen the reason and use of this memorial rite. I presume no unprejudiced man, who reads *St. Paul's* account of this Institution, the qualification of the communicant, the abusive perversions of it among the Corinthians,* would once be led to suppose any infants were communicated.

And should we be of opinion, that the *Eucharist* did succeed and supersede the passover, it does not appear that infants had ever eat of that memorial lamb: for we have no account of the child Jesus being taken to that festival at Jerusalem till

* 1 Cor. xi, 20, end,

“matter of fact on which christianity is founded.”† What that matter of fact was, See *Tit.* ii. 14. *Gal.* i. 4. *John* xvii. 14, 15. and many other places.

V. From the powerful influence which a love of truth actually had within the breast of the blessed Jesus, we can conclude with confidence the superiority over all temptation which it will give to every one so animated: as is to be seen in the astonishing serenity and calmness preserved in our Lord, under a series of unexampled provocations! Indeed the greatness of his behaviour under the insults of his enemies, and the tortures of a crucifixion,‡ is no other way to be accounted for, but from his love of truth

he was twelve years of age; which was agreeable to the Jewish custom: but before that time he is not said to have been with his parents, though they went up every year. *Luk.* ii. 41, 42.

The argument of the learned PIERCE adopted by the very celebrated Dr. PRIESTLEY, as taken from a custom that obtained in an early age of the Church, has no binding authority; for many extravagancies were introduced by both Jewish and Pagan converts. No traces of infant communion are to be found in the New Testament canon; but its whole testimony is against the practice. Had it been intended for infants, would not our Lord, or his apostles have informed us? one thing I see in the disgusting idea of Infant Communion, which it is to be supposed these great men would condemn, viz. it would countenance the giving of the Eucharist to the dying, or *in articulo mortis*; since, with them, it does not require any knowledge of its intention in the receiver. And the Quaker as well as others might well look upon it, as a childish and unmeaning ritual. *Do this in remembrance of me*: cannot be an injunction upon infants.

† Emlyn's *Traacts*, Vol. iii. p. 240.

‡ Consult Dr LARDNER's excellent Sermon, *on the greatness of Jesus in his last suffering*.

and God; which was what filled him with so much concern to recover and save a lost world, deluged in ignorance, superstition, idolatry and vice.

After all, it is extremely difficult to persuade men of the infinite importance of an unreserved devotedness to the will of God; and yet, no mathematical demonstration can be more clear and convincing: but the difficulty arises from an aversion to religious inquiries, and to the labors of virtue. A faulty education, rooted prejudice, bad example, fashionable evil-maxims and customs, do enervate the mind so much, as to rob its powers and faculties of their freedom; and reduce them to a slavish subjection to the tyranny of the appetites and passions. Ignorance, idolatry, and superstition have taught men to build upon this singular unparalleled act of obedience, a superstructure, quite full of rank and offensive absurdity: and much weakness, inconsistency and presumption, have taken place of those genuine effects, *viz.* serenity, regularity, fortitude, and firmness of mind under the pressures of mortality; though these foundations of existence are found to be solid and unshaken, and the relishes of them truly refined, satisfying, and refreshing. They manifestly disown MATERIALISM; and allow it to have no relation at all to the spiritual and moral system, or to the life-principle of immortality.

It must be owned, that the doctrine of Christ's death, has been deplorably depraved and corrupted in the popular opinions; insomuch that the mind of the unbeliever revolts and takes offence at
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the representations which are full of nonsense and impenetrable mystery :—but however keen may be the infidel sneer, we may be well assured of this, *viz.* that the New Testament doctrine of the death of Christ, as it evinceth the love of God, so it shews the energy there is in a love of that system of truth, which has enough in it, either to *sink* an unbelieving, or to *save* a believing world.—“To God only wise, be glory
“through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

ON THE
EXALTATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

Col. i. 15. to the 19th verse inclusively,—“ Who
“ is the image of the invisible God, the first-
“ born of every creature : for by him were all
“ things created that are in heaven, and that are
“ in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones,
“ or dominions, or principalities, or powers :
“ all things were created by him and for him,
“ And he is before all things, and by him all
“ consist ; and he is the head of the body the
“ church : who is the beginning, the first-born
“ from the dead ; that in all things he might
“ have the pre-eminence. For it pleased *the*
“ *Father*, that in him should all fulness dwell.”

THAT celebrated ecclesiastical historian and
biblical Critic, the late Reverend Dr. LARD-
NER, has shewn, that “ this epistle was proba-
“ bly written and sent to the church at Colosse
“ towards the end of the year of Christ 62 ;
“ about the same time with that written to the
“ Philippians, and in the second year of St. *Paul's*
“ imprisonment at Rome. And also that it is
“ reason-

“reasonable to conclude, this same apostle had
 “planted a church there; for St. *Luke* in-
 “forms us, of his having been twice in Phrygia,
 “in which were the three capital cities of *Colosse*,
 “*Laodicea*, and *Hierapolis*. See *Acts* xvi. 6. and
 “*ch.* xviii. 23. He also informs us, that the apostle
 “went over all the countries of Galatia and Phrygia
 “in order, strengthening the brethren, *ch.* xix. 1.
 “In both of his journeys it is reasonable to con-
 “clude, he would visit these chief cities.”*

In this epistle, the apostle expresses great sol-
 licitude about the christians at Colosse, that they
 would profess the christian doctrine in its pu-
 rity; keeping themselves free from erroneous con-
 ceptions of its truth and grace. And he urges
 their thankful acknowledgment for the know-
 ledge they had of God; a people who had lately
 been more generally ignorant and idolatrous Gen-
 tiles; he would have them direct their homage
 “to God the Father, who had made them meet
 “to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints
 “in light; and had delivered them from the
 “power of darkness, and translated them into the
 “kingdom of his dear Son; in whom they
 “had redemption through his blood, even the for-
 “giveness of sins.”

He proceeds, in the words of my text, to deli-
 neate the delegated dignity and pre-eminence of
 Jesus Christ. A reason of which was evidently
 this,—they had, in their Gentilism, been ac-
 customed to worship *Gods many, and Lords many*:

* See his supplement, Vol. ii. and the chapter on this
 Epistle.

but now, as christians they are to acknowledge only one God, and one Lord; in which unity of idea, they would find themselves free from all confusion in their religious worship.—

This premised,—in discoursing upon this figurative description here given of that dignity which the great God has conferred on the man Christ Jesus; I would *First*, attempt the genuine sense and meaning of the description. *Secondly*, enumerate some of its most highly beneficial instructions to mankind.

Much obscurity, I apprehend, has been thrown upon this account of our Lord's exaltation. In attempting the sense of so very sublime a description, a careful view shall be taken of it, in the order in which it lies before us.—

And the first thing which our apostle says of Jesus Christ, is, *that he is the image of the invisible God*.—Now an *image* may be either an artificial representation, or visible likeness taken by the pencil, chisel, &c. of a visible material object: Yea, it may be whatever has an apt tendency to raise in us just ideas and conceptions of what is invisible. For *example*, the informing spirit and power of language, either by the lip or by letters, will give us the image of one another's inward thoughts, tempers, dispositions, designs, or of the mental complexion; as will also in some degree, be discovered by the eye, the air and mien, and outward gesture of a man.

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That the apostle could not by the word, *image*, intend an artificial, figured, corporeal, visible representation and form of that which has no figure or bodily-form, is self-evident ; forasmuch as by reason of the Archetype of the image having no form nor figure, and being absolutely invisible ; because without limit or boundary of presence ; it is impossible that the visible figured, circumscribed, organized man Jesus Christ, should in that sense be the image of God. There can be no similitude possibly taken of what is infinite and immense ; no adequate, no competent idea can be formed, no comprehensive metaphysical idea of an infinite, uncaused Being. But in the other sense of an *image*, understood as what has an apt tendency to raise in us an idea or conception of what is absolutely invisible, or of what is the internal purpose, the will, desire or design of another intelligent being, our Jesus may be justly stiled, the *image of the invisible God* ; inasmuch as he has been enabled fully to reveal to us what is the determinate, immutable mind and will of the invisible God.—In which sense, he is so perfect an image of him, as to say, “ he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father ;—and I “ and the Father are one ; ”—which can only be understood of that faithful and complete revelation which he has made of the will of God, considered both as Governor and Father ; for God’s truth and grace he has made plainly intelligible to man. Nay, so far as we ourselves are attempered and formed by that manifestation which he has made of the mind and will of God ; so far we are also made in the image of the invisible God,—so says St. Paul, ch. iii. 10. of this epistle—“ putting on the new man, we are
“ renewed

“renewed in righteousness, after the image of him who created us.”—I might add, that *Adam*, the first parent of mankind, was created in the image of God; because capable of knowing and doing his will, and because he had a dominion assigned him over the lower creation.

Whereby we are led to another view, in which the man Christ Jesus may be said to be the image of the invisible God; and that is, his being appointed to a supreme dominion; *the first-born of every creature.*

The Greek word ($\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\chi\theta\epsilon\omicron$) rendered *first-born*, cannot mean the *first* in order of time, but in office, rank, and dignity; he had a name given him *above* every name; not *before* every name. The first born imports, *excellence*; and has respect to a *new*, and not to the *old* creation: *viz.* the Gospel-kingdom, the last and finished dispensation of God's truth and grace. And hence *all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, are said to be CREATED by him and for him.*—

Here it should be carefully observed, that the word rendered, *create*, does not by any means signify, that they were brought into existence by him; but as the great LOCKE well remarked, St. Paul is wont to speak of the Gospel-dispensation, as a *new creation*; and of the converts to christianity as *new creatures*. So that he useth the word ($\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$) which literally signifies a proper creation; or, a bringing into existence that which was not; but must here have
a figu-

a figurative, or a metaphorical meaning, and import, a *change of condition*:* for the same apostle, when speaking of the mystery which from the beginning had been hid in God, who *created* all things by Jesus Christ; must undoubtedly have a reference to the all things in this *new* and heavenly kingdom.—To the same purpose, it is observed “of the Hebrew word *Bara*, which “signifies in the literal sense to create, whenever “applied to God’s bringing into existence what “had not been before:” yet, even that same word is applied in a very figurative sense in the Hebrew scriptures, as in Numb. xvi. 30. to extraordinary divine operations, in which there is no production of any *new* being; but it is used for the earth’s being made to swallow up *Korah* and his company; and for the wonderful scenery, Exod. xxiv. 10. And for the moral renewal of the human heart, “*create* in me a clean heart, “O God,” Psal. li. 10. and for the divine influences in his moral kingdom; “I form “the light, and create darkness, I make peace “and create evil.”† And *once more*, it is used for the putting a nation into a new and more happy condition, Isa. xliii. 1. and 15. Which last use of the term, will throw much light upon the *creation* spoken of in the text: all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, having Jesus Christ placed at their head, are, for that very reason, said to be created by him and for him. It is therefore with propriety said,

* See his notes on Eph. iii. 9.

† See Dr. D. Jennings’s introduction to the Globes, p. 162. and Dr. Taylor’s Hebrew Concordance, No. 224. Isa. xlv. 7.

And he is before all things, and by him all things CONSIST. So that there is no want of regularity, order, and harmony throughout the plan of his administration in God's kingdom. With which agree the accounts given of him in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the Angels are commanded to obey his orders, and so to worship him. And can we now wonder, that an apostle who was a Jew, and conversant with the Hebrew scriptures should use the word *create*, in a figurative sense, when speaking of our Lord's exaltation? we cannot, when we have found that the prophets of old had so used the word *create*; and especially when we consider that metaphor is common in all languages. To proceed,

And he is the head of the body, the church.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, this apostle says, "God has placed Jesus Christ far above
 "all principalities and powers, and might, and
 "dominion, and every name that is named, not
 "only in this world, but in that which is to
 "come: and has put all things under his feet,
 "and has given him to be head over all things
 "to the church, which is his body, the fulness
 "of him who filleth all in all." Ch. i. 21, 22, 23.
 compare this with *Colos.* ii. 9, 10. "In him
 "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*,
 "(i. e. as the church is his body.) and ye are
 "complete in him who is the head of all prin-
 "cipality and power." The great God is farther
 said to be, "in the dispensation of the fulness of
 "times, gathering together in one, all things in
 "Christ,

“ Christ, both which are in the heaven, and on
“ the earth, even in him.” Eph. i. 10.

Jesus Christ is also said to be the *beginning*,
the first-born from the dead.

The Greek word ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta$) rendered, *beginning*, properly imports, a first authority; for we find it translated, *Rule*, 1 Cor. xv. 12. and *Magistrate*, Luke xii. 11. and *Principality*, Tit. iii. 1. we may therefore, I apprehend, very justly understand it here, of the first or chief potentate in God's creation.—And then *the first-born from the dead*; should seem to denote, a singularity of idea; none other in any age ever rising from the dead in a public character. Or, as Lord both of the dead and of the living! the sure pledge and earnest of the resurrection of all his faithful followers. And for which reason he styles himself, *the resurrection and the life*! and affirms, “ that all who believe in him shall never die, i. e. “ death shall have no power over them; or, “ though they die, yet shall they live; for because “ he liveth, they shall live also.” This determines him to be the chief potentate, as he is the first-born from the dead, and has abolished, or made void the dominion of death.

In these great respects it is, *that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*.—Which must be the case with him, “ who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express character of his “ person.” Nor can any one call in question the propriety of these high descriptions given of him, if he can credit an apostle who has said so expressly,

prefsly, that it has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

We plainly perceive, that St. Paul here has his eye upon the Gentile Converts, who had their *Pantheon*, and had been accustomed to the idolatrous worship of *many Gods*: to each of which they were wont to ascribe distinct powers, provinces, and sundry divine influences; they had also a great variety of *demons* and *Lords*, to whom they paid homage: they even fancied, that their Gods had different sensitive tastes and relishes. So that some were pleased with human sacrifices; others, with those of beasts of various kinds; others, with herbs only, and the fruits of the earth.

To dissipate and remove this thick palpable darkness, to correct and cure these gross and debasing ideas of the object of worship, it pleased the Father to constitute the man Christ Jesus, the *Shechinah* of his Almighty power, the minister of his rule and providence; and to put all things under his feet: But then, this was not done, till after he had revealed all his truth and grace by him. So that now the christian has the whole of that good, he can either hope for or reasonably desire, secured to him everlastingly in the apprehended great appointments of his exalted head and Lord.

The adorable Father communicates all his favours and blessings through this intelligible me-

* N. B. Though the words, *the Father*, are not in the text, but as a supply, yet it must be a proper one.

dium, whether they relate to the present, or to the future life of man. And what can be more reasonable, or more worthy of God, when the terms of his favour are so divinely made known, and authenticated to mankind? well might St. *John* say, “the word was made flesh, i. e. was “*shechinized* in flesh, and dwelt among us, full “of grace and truth; and of his fulness we all “receive even grace after grace.” He being thus qualified for all the purposes of his exalted appointments, we may rest fully satisfied with, and truly thankful for, our having “such an high “priest in the heavens, who is able to save to the “uttermost all who come unto God by him; seeing he ever lives the *medium* of our access unto “and intercourse with the one God the Father; “whose is the kingdom, the power, and the glory “for ever!”

In the above sense this most sublime description given of the man Christ Jesus, exalted to the right hand of power! has been understood.—

The advantageous instructions which mankind might receive, from the New Testament doctrine of our Lord's exaltation, are many. I will give a specimen of some of those beneficial teachings, in the following articles; which will be enough, I trust, to evince *the ingratitude which there is in infidelity.*

I. From the doctrinal view we have taken, it appears evident, that no rational and just ideas can be formed of this account of our Lord's exaltation, unless we consider it as having immediately to do with the Gospel kingdom; i. e.

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with that *new creation* which St. Paul has in his eye in this description; for so he is wont to speak of the converted Gentiles, as men delivered from darkness, by Gospel address; and brought into God's marvellous light! as children of light and of the day; in contrast to the unbelievers remaining in darkness. Nor is there any other idea to be formed of that *creating*, here applied to the man Christ Jesus; for though some would urge St. *John's* beginning his Gospel with the *word* or *logos*, and saying that all things were created by him; he does not mean, any other than the omnipotent creative word or will of God. The which word cannot constitute the person of Christ, though the same word of God did dwell with him. Or, as that Evangelist says, by its dwelling with him, it was what gave him the *glory* of being the only begotten of the Father, full of "grace and truth." That Evangelical historian, I apprehend, makes no mention of Jesus Christ, till he has finished the *preface* to his Gospel, which he does at v. 14.

Besides, as to our Lord's *creating*, it can never mean, that he brought any *new* creature into being: or, that he had any hand in the first creation; for this good reason, *viz.* because he never once says that he had: Whereas, had he been the instrument by whom God created the heaven and the earth, he must have with-held from the people, to whom he was sent to deliver the Gospel-message, a most powerful argument for their reverence of him, as their creator.

Moreover, it is impossible either that there could be more than one creator, or, that the
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one Creator could employ any instrument in bringing into existence that which was not. *God creates without any instrument* ;* because in such an act of omnipotence there could be no *medium* supposeable between cause and effect. And of this we are informed, by the account given of God's creating power ; he spake, "and it was done ; he said, let there be light, and there was light : he commanded, and it stood fast." Neither is there a single instance upon record of our Lord's ever bringing any *new* species of matter into existence ; re-productions indeed there were many : but proper creation is only to be ascribed to the infinite spirit, the first unoriginated and uncaused cause of all !—

I will add, that our apostle appears, to me, to lay the greatest *emphasis* upon the change made in the spirits and morals of men by the Gospel, as if it were a *new-creation* : for he compares it to the first creation ; and says, if any man be in Christ, he is a *new* creature : old things are passed away ; behold all things are become *new*. Also he speaks, of our putting on the *new* man ; and all this with great propriety, for our Lord calls it, a *new birth* : and says, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

II. All those things in heaven and earth, over which he was placed, had a *prior* existence to his having the rule over them : or they had a being antecedent to his high appointments. Consequently, for any one to suppose him, to have

* See the Creed of the Orthodox Mahometans, in Oakley's History of the Saracens, Vol. 11. p. 52.

been the *creator* of all these things, and then to imagine his being exalted or raised above them; would imply a very flagrant gross absurdity. In truth, we are not able to form any just idea of his exaltation, if it was not subsequent to his death and resurrection. It most certainly was *in futuro*, and was *the joy set before him*; by virtue of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame; and to which he has an eye when he tells his disciples, “that they shall see the heaven open, and the Angels of God, ascending and descending upon the son of man.” And when he, in the face of the Sanhedrin, as their prisoner, said, “hereafter ye shall see the son of man sit on the right hand of power;” and *again*, “the son of man, says he, shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him.”—His exaltation must therefore have been *subsequent* to his public ministrations here on earth. And I freely own, it does not appear to me that the blessed Jesus had any real existence before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin; when “in the fulness of time he was made of a woman, made under the law.”—He had verily in the divine purpose, and in prophecy, a place *before* the birth of Abraham; or even before the formation of Adam: for he had a glory designed him before the foundation of the world. But then, this was in no other sense, than as he was *a Lamb slain* from the foundation of the world. And, it seems probable that our apostle, looks upon “this revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience

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“dience of faith ;” to be such, that because of the astonishing and adorable wisdom of the plan, he ascribes to God ONLY WISE glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

These ideas will be very consistent with that of our Lord’s exaltation ; whereas, the *pre-existent* hypothesis, and the notion of the world’s being made by him, will not at all accord with his humiliation and exaltation : will not agree to his proper humanity : nor allow him to be an *example* of our imitation, as a partaker of flesh and blood. But when we view him as the seed of the woman, and promised to Abraham as his descendant, and to be of the family of *David*, we can claim the relation to him of *brethren* : and refresh ourselves with the honours which the Father has conferred upon him as our vital head, and as Lord both of the dead and of the living : ten thousand benefits we derive from the adorable plan of the Gospel-Institution.*

III. The exaltation of Jesus Christ, all his high appointments are the gracious and Fatherly-bestowments of the infinite Spirit ; whose incessant presence with him, is what furnisheth his capacity of exercising those high offices to which he has been exalted.—We have full evidence of this ; since it was to the *end* of God’s making himself so gloriously known in his paternal regards to mankind, that the Gospel-plan was ori-

* If any one would see the argument, in its full force, let him consult the *Letter written in the year 1730.*—Also the *true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered ;* which deny the pre-existence of Christ.

ginally laid, and to which end all preparatory measures have been taken from the beginning.—
 “*Father*, says Jesus, *glorify thy name*. Again, “now is God *glorified* in the son of man.”—
 St. Paul, to the same purpose, says, “every tongue shall confess him Lord to the praise and *glory* of God the Father,—and he tells us, that “the adoption of us as *Sons*, is to the praise and *glory* of his grace!”

And yet, because of those superior honours which the Father has been pleased to confer on the man Christ Jesus, many have ascribed to this our blessed Lord an uncreated, underived divine nature; and to represent him as “God equal with the *Father*!” nay, there are not a few who pay him the homage which is due only to the one God: but then, these have imagined, that the infinite spirit can be divided, and split into “three parts or persons, the same in substance, “as well as equal in power and glory:” which when duly considered, will be seen to be the quintessence of a prophane and enormous absurdity; or, the most debasing, depraved idea of the one object of supreme homage.

They therefore must have their eyes fast sealed, who can be so stupid as to suppose, that an eternal being of infinite wisdom, almighty power, and an immensity of presence can be either *abased*, or *exalted*; that God can be both sovereign and subject: or, be passively obedient unto, and then reward himself.—Again, what extravagance would there be in supposing the unbeginning, unchangeable, everlasting God, to be the *first-born* of every creature, and the *image* of himself! to be the
first-

first-born from the dead! the beginning or the *chief* of his own creation! And all this, when on the contrary, these epithets are the most expressly descriptive characteristics of a created being; or, of one individual of that same species of creatures, whereof he is said to be the *first-born*; i. e. over whom God has given him such pre-eminence. So that the *all things*, said to be created by him and *for* him must only denote God's orderance, disposal, guidance and government of them by his instrumentality. No other should here seem to be the natural sense of the word, *create*, as, I trust, has been sufficiently shewn.

And in confirmation of this sense, God's *not giving the Spirit by measure* to the man Christ Jesus; during his earthly ministrations, was needful to the purpose of preparing mankind for giving due credit to his high and heavenly appointments.—The whole scenery of his public-life, was accordingly an earnest to himself, as well as to the world, that the great God designed to make him the instrument of his power and goodness, in the Government and Providence which he exerciseth both in heaven and earth. But the being who has these honours conferred upon him, can be no other than a *creature*, who must owe those very divine honours to the one supreme God and Father of all!—*Again,*

To suppose the *receiver* of the recompence of reward, to be equal to the *giver* of that recompence, can be no other than an astonishing extravagance! or, to ascribe to him the *receiver* incommunicable perfections, is to give the glory due only to God, to a man, who is but the

recipient; God having exalted him to the right hand of power.

At the same time, we chearfully own, the blessed Jesus, whom we view as thus exalted, claims an honourable regard due to God's representative; the prime minister in his church and kingdom; but not as the original infinite source of such delegated authority and power.—

This same St. Paul, has given us the clearest and most determinate ideas of the *subordination* of the exalted Jesus to his God and Father—when he says to the Corinthians, “I would have you know, that the head of every man, is Christ; that the head of the woman, is the man; and that the head of Christ, is God.” No scale of ideas can be more expressive and instructive, than this of the several classes of superiority and subordinacy which are in the established plan of God's rule and government.

It was a good observation made by a learned pen, upon Heb. iv. 9. that the character of *sitting on the throne*, belongs only to God the Father.*

IV. The distinguished honours conferred on the man Christ Jesus, had for their obvious *reason* and *ground*, his distinguished, his matchless piety and obedience. Nor can any view of his exaltation be more satisfactory and refreshing to an human

* ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου never belongs to Christ in St. John's style. See an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, *the Apostles Cried better than the Assemblies Catechism*, p. 61. Printed 1720, said to be by Mr. Joseph Hallet junior.

mind; as it gives the most adorable ideas of Almighty God, contemplated as a moral Governor.—We see in it his *love of righteousness*, and his fatherly concern to inspire mankind with a first solicitude to please him, by doing all his will:—and hence it is, that the Christian is exhorted to look to Jesus as the author, the leader-on, and the finisher of his faith;—and as the captain of his salvation, who was perfected through sufferings:—God thus placeth before the eye of man, the fixed, eternal connexions which there are between a love of truth, and supreme happiness.—It thus renders the vast designs of heaven familiar to us: and we can read the transporting lines of his truth and grace, in their inseparable and everlasting establishment.—

No *Sceptic*, no *Infidel* can point out so much as the shadow of human contrivance in any part of the Gospel plan; nor can he produce one mark of defect in the evidence of our Lord's exaltation; or shew it to be unworthy of our highest gratitude and praise! for it holds up to open view, the infinite importance of our doing the will of God, from the reward conferred on the personal obedience of Jesus Christ; and leaves no room for the least excuse, or apology for our disobedience, in any given circumstance of human trial; and it also thus indulges, with the utmost scope of exertion, the most refined, sublime, and boundless wish, desire, and delight of the soul of man.—Hence we may be bold to say, it appears to us, that the great and good God could not have more *glorified* himself; or have appeared more adorable to the human race, than in this last dispensation of his truth and grace by the man Jesus Christ

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Christ our Lord. So that there must be *ingratitude in infidelity*.

V. All scruples in the Christian about making his addresses in the name, or through the mediation of the exalted Jesus, do instantly die away, when once contemplated by him as that SHECHINAH of God, by whose instrumentality he is directing, protecting, and governing his church and world.—We are likewise, by this contemplation, much more able to form an idea of *locality* in the presence of the beatifying glory! i. e. we can better conceive of the blissful heavenly abodes, by a circumscribed, visible, conversible personage of our own species, placed at the right hand of power; the most glorious manifestations of an invisible incomprehensible spirit, are, by this *medium* made more fatherly, familiar, and felicitating!

However, to the Infidel, the *mediation* of Jesus, as systematically or generally understood, has been, and yet is a great stumbling-block. Whereas, would he but fix his eye upon the New Testament, that divine and rational representation of this *medium* of access and address; he would be persuaded, that this is the most informing, divinely pleasing, and delightful plan that could be laid for the direction of our homage; forasmuch as since “it has pleased the Father, *that in him* “*should all fulness dwell,*” we are naturally led to reverence him as the great *medium*, or minister of all divine communications of grace and mercy. We address the one God, through the mediation of this one Lord, whom he has made head over all things to his church, the *FULNESS of him who*

filletb all in all! But yet, in this direction of our homage, we consider the man Christ Jesus, as no other than the MEDIUM; and not as that being, between whom and us he mediates. And how clearly does this correspond with the natural ideas of man, who ever sought a *medium* of worship?—

It is astonishing that any should pretend to make use of the name of Jesus as a mediator; and all the while worship him as if he was *no mediator*; but ultimately as the one supreme! On the contrary, the rational Christian distinguishes in the object of his worship, between the Father and the Son—between the *sovereign* and the *subject*,* or minister of his rule and government. He knows, that that fulness of the God-head which dwells bodily, or so communicatively in Jesus Christ, is not that Jesus Christ himself, with whom, or in whom such a fulness dwells.—and thus the purity of Christian worship is preserved, and appears to be rational, and becoming the most perfect manifestations of divine truth and mercy.—

VI. Our blessed Lord's being exalted above all order of beings, invisible as well as visible, will relieve the human mind from any manner of uneasy or painful apprehensions about *apparitions*, *evil-spirits*, or *demons*.—

Under former dispensations, the great God did make use of the visible ministration of Angels; and by their hands did both preserve and punish

* 1 Cor. xv. 27, 28.

mankind. The Sacred Scriptures do plainly teach this doctrine ; but inasmuch as under the Gospel-dispensation, all created powers, visible and invisible, are put in subjection to the sceptre of Jesus, we have no reason to apprehend any kind of injury or harm from evil angels, or demons.—The *Jews*, we know, were wont to ascribe all incurable distempers and calamities to their causality.

And much noise has been made in the world about apparitions and prodigies preter-natural. Even in the darker ages of a corrupted Christian profession, men have not come behind either *Jews* or *Pagans* in various inventions to fill vulgar minds with fearful images. And a very learned writer on prodigies, says, “ *Rome Pagan* was as good at inventing stories of prodigies and apparitions of the Gods, as *Rome Christian* of miracles and apparitions of Saints.”*

It is no small satisfaction to the Christian, that his Lord has a name given him above every name : and that all must bow to him, whether things in heaven, in earth, or under the earth. This consideration sets the christian *free* from all dread of apparitions, or of evil spirits ; and will not suffer him to be disturbed by fanciful ideas of their mal-influence. For notwithstanding there has been no visible assistance afforded from good Angels, since the Apostles, as there was in their age ; yet we may reasonably conclude, that in every succeeding age of the church, they must

* SPENCER on prodigies, p. 8.

be employed in the Christian's favor ; forasmuch as they are all sent forth to minister to them who are, or shall be the heirs of salvation.

VII. The exaltation of the man Christ Jesus, peremptorily and absolutely forbids all *creature-worship*. There are several instances on sacred record, where the worship of Saints and Angels is expressly condemned. St. Paul and Barnabas when they had miraculously healed the cripple at *Lystra*, forbade the idolatry ; and St. Peter would not suffer any religious worship to be paid him by *Cornelius*, though he had considered that apostle as only a divine messenger.—And St. John's conductor through the visionary heavenly scenes, reprimanded his falling down at his feet.—“ See, ” said he, *thou do it not* : for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, &c. “ worship thou God.”

A learned writer observed, that the idolatry of *Angel-worship* is condemned in this epistle, ch. ii. 18, 19. “ The Jews had received the doctrine, ” and the converts from among them brought “ along with them what was borrowed in a great “ measure from the heathen Philosophers ; and “ *Philo says,* there are other souls most pure and “ good, who have a greater and more divine judgment and understanding, and who desire nothing at “ all that is earthly : these are the presidents or “ princes of the Almighty, like the eyes and ears of “ some great King, beholding, and hearing all things : “ these the Philosophers call demons, but the Hebrew*

* De Somnis, p. 586.

“scriptures use to call them, and that most properly,
 “Angels; for they carry the Father’s commandments
 “to his children, and the children to the Father :
 “and therefore the scripture represents them as ascend-
 “ing and descending. It is expedient, says he, for us
 “mortals to make use of such mediators. Again, if
 “Angels were such mediators, a worship was due to
 “them, viz. the saints should offer up their prayers
 “to God by them, offering them up to them, that they
 “might present them to God.”

Now, my Author observes, “this mischief con-
 “tinued long in Phrygia and Pisidia; hence the
 “council, that met at Laodicea in Phrygia, made
 “a law against praying to Angels; and to this
 “very day,* says *Theodoret*, are to be seen among
 “them, and in the neighbouring parts, the ora-
 “tories of St. *Michael*; and that the *Essenes*, took
 “great care about the name of Angels.”

I would add, that the worship of the *papal-
 church* is anti-christian, and idolatrous: for it makes
 use of many mediators. But unto us Christians,
 “there is but one God; and but ONE MEDIATOR
 “between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”

It is said, I am afraid too justly, that that shock-
 ing popish *Superstition* is now gaining ground, in a
 protestant Christian nation—but if it be true, it can
 do no other than deprave and unchristianize the
 spirit of our people—for the worship of papal-
 Rome, is not at all fit for men, considered either

* About the fourth century, So Mr. *James Pierce* on the place.
 See his paraphrase.

as rational beings, or as christians. And were it not for the dissipation and debauchery, which are become epidemical, and an avowed aim in public a———n, to give a despotic sway to the British Sceptre, we might well be astonished at the delusion. To conclude,

It is presumed, that the truth of the proposition in the Title-page has been made evident, viz. “that the ingratitude of infidelity is proveable, “from the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus “Christ being the most beneficial appointments “that are within the known plan of God’s moral “government;” for that whoever ruminates upon the seven views above taken of the advantageous instruction which mankind may receive from those appointments, must have the highest reverence of the New Testament writings, as an *inestimable treasure*! which informs us, that he is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; for by the whole of Gospel address, we are led to glory in it, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God; inasmuch as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and glory given him, that our *faith* and *hope* might be in God.

171. 9. 19

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

- Page 4. l. 22. for $\Psi\upsilon\eta\eta$ read $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta$.
5. l. 5. from bottom, for *lie*, read *lye*.
25. Note, dele *and*.
26. l. 3. from bottom, for *as* read *which*.